

Duffin...

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below Aeneas's home on Division Street (where the PUD substation is located today). With diligent efforts, Allan and others raised money to begin construction, and in October 1886, the new church building, named St. John's was dedicated. Allan and Elizabeth Duffin's first daughter, Mary Elizabeth "Leila" Duffin (later Chappell), born Feb. 8, 1886, was the first infant baptized at St. John's Presbyterian Church.

A year after Leila's birth, a son Charles G. Duffin, arrived. In 1888, Allan became clerk of session for the church, and remained in that post for 27 years. Elizabeth Duffin was also active at St. John's as recording secretary of the Women's Group. However, she took time out in 1899, to have a third child, Marjorie MacMaster Duffin Blake. Five years later on July 21, 1904, the baby of the family, Ella Maye (Maysie) Duffin, was born.

In the meantime Aeneas MacMaster passed away in 1888. His son, Hugh MacMaster, returned from Canada to take over management of the MacMaster Store, which had moved in 1885 to larger quarters at Third and Columbia. Realizing the value to the firm of long-time employee and brother-in-law, Allan Duffin, Hugh offered Allan a partnership in July 1890. The two named the store "MacMaster and Company" and their business flourished as never before.

Around this time, Baby Maysie Duffin contracted tuberculosis, and because it infected her spine, she had to wear a brace that was fitted in Portland. That meant the Duffins had to travel a full day by steamboat for Maysie's medical care. It also meant she couldn't play with the other children.

In the early 1900s, the two oldest Duffin children, Leila and Charles, attended school with other pioneer children, including Nora Self, Harry Farrell, the McKeever children, Claude Knapp and Alice Asher Blake among others. In 1901, Leila was a member of the first eighth-grade class to graduate in Camas.

After Leila graduated from high school in 1904, she taught school in Ellsworth and directed church school cantatas. Charles graduated in 1905. The first official graduating class from Camas High School was in 1911 and included Vera Harrington who would later marry Charles Duffin. In 1914, Marjorie MacMaster Duffin graduated from Camas Grammar School and entered Camas High School with a scientific course.

In 1915, when Maysie was nine years old, a tragedy befell the Duffins. Allan Duffin was shepherding a barge load of church school children and teachers to a picnic on Lady's Island. A river boat bore down on the barge and would have rammed it had Duffin not intervened. In the struggle to push it away, he fell into the river and gave his life for those on board, including members of his own family. Although he was a good swimmer, it was assumed his head hit the boat, because he was not seen



THE DUFFIN family is shown here around 1918 after Allan's death.

again. At the age of 58, Allan Duffin was dead. His tombstone read "Here lies a Woodsman of the World."

Being a woman of strong faith helped to sustain Elizabeth Duffin in dealing with the unexpected loss of her husband. The next few years were difficult ones, with two of the Duffin children still in school. Elizabeth had full responsibility for not only keeping her household going, but also providing for the children. For that reason, she took over her husband's partnership at MacMaster and Company, and as the company grew, her financial affairs improved. In 1916, a modern, two-story concrete reinforced building was erected at Fourth and Clark.

On Feb. 24, 1944, Elizabeth was interviewed by the Camas Post, on the occasion of her 79th birthday. She was bright and witty, and related many humorous stories of early Camas and her family.

Elizabeth MacMaster Duffin died in 1945 at the age of 80 years after a bad fall. She had been in the hospital for two weeks trying to recover. Her tombstone read "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." And, indeed she did, from the early days of being Camas' first schoolmarm, to all the years of service to St. John's, and her contribution to the MacMaster business legacy. And, raising four fine children who were the beginnings of future generations of Camas citizens. One hour after Elizabeth's death, her first great-grandchild was born to Lt. Kenneth Powell and Katharine A. Chappell Powell in Roswell, New Mexico.

There are many descendants of the original Duffin family living in the Camas area today, and these fine people are continuing the strong Duffin tradition of being a very caring and vital part of the community.